

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 9115

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, VT, GE

SUBJECT: VATICAN "FOREIGN MINISTER'S" VISIT TO EAST GERMANY

REF: ROME 8109

FROM AMBASSADOR LODGE'S OFFICE

SUMMARY: THOUGH NO "CONCLUSIVE AGREEMENTS" WERE MADE DURING HIS FIRST OFFICIAL CONTACT WITH EAST GERMANY, "FOREIGN MINISTER" CASAROLI IS CONFIDENT THAT THE "DIRECT DIALOGUE" WILL CONTINUE AND THAT FRUITFUL RESULTS WILL BE FORTHCOMING. THE VATICAN WILL EXPLOIT GDR ARDENCY FOR POLITICAL GECOGNITION FROM THE HOLY SEE AS MEANS OF EXTRACTING BEST POSSIBLE TERMS FOR CHURCH'S OPERATIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. VATICAN "FOREIGN MINISTER" CASAROLI TOLD US ON JUNE 23 THAT THE FIRST OFFICIAL CONTACT WITH GDR AUTHORITIES HAD BEEN CONDUCTED IN AN ATMOSPHERE WHICH ALLOWED HIM TO OUTLINE SPECIFIC AND FUNDAMENTAL PROPOSALS AS THE BASIS FOR FUTURE VATICAN-GDR RELATIONSHIPS. ACCORDING TO CASAROLI, THE GDR TOOK NOTE OF THE VATICAN'S EXPOSITION OF ITS POSITION BUT THAT THEIR PRIMARY INTERESTS LAY IN OBTAINING QUICKLY POLITICAL RECOGNITION FROM THE VATICAN.

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AS A FIRST STEP TOWARDS THAT LATTER, GDR WANTS VATICAN TO CREATE

SEPARATE DIOCESES FROM THREE CHURCH TERRITORIES IN GDR WHICH PRESENTLY FORM PART OF WEST GERMAN DIOCESES, AND ALSO CREATION OF SEPARATE EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE IN EAST GERMANY. CASAROLI SAID THAT HE WAS NON-COMMITTAL ON THESE TWO POINTS SINCE SUCH A CHANGE IS VIGOROUSLY OPPOSED BY WEST GERMAN BISHOPS AND BECAUSE THE VATICAN DOES NOT WISH TO CONCEDE ON THESE POINTS UNTIL IT KNOWS WHAT IT WILL BE ABLE TO EXTRACT FROM THE GDR IN RETURN.

2. CASAROLI STATED THAT OPPOSITION TO HIS TRIP TO EAST BERLIN ON THE PART OF WEST GERMAN BISHOPS HAD DECREASED RECENTLY AND THAT HE CONSIDERED FENCES WERE ADEQUATELY MENDED WITH THEM, IMPLYING THAT THE VATICAN HAD GIVEN ASSURANCES TO THE BISHOPS THAT VATICAN WAS NOT ABOUT TO SACRIFICE ITS RELATIONS WITH THE MASS FAITHFUL IN THE WEST IN ITS DEALINGS WITH EAST GERMAN AUTHORITIES. CASAROLI FURTHER STATED THAT THE VATICAN'S POLICY CANNOT BE BASED PURELY ON "REALPOLITIK," DIVORCED FROM JURIDICAL AND MORAL CONSIDERATIONS.

3. CASAROLI MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE FORESEES GDR FORTHCOMINGNESS REGARDING THE CHURCH'S LIFE IN EAST GERMANY. HE ATTRIBUTED THIS, FIRSTLY, ON THE ARDENT DESIRE OF GDR FOR POLITICAL RECOGNITION AND, SECONDLY, TO THE FACT THAT THE GDR ALREADY CONCEDES "AUTONOMY" WITH REGARD TO THE ADMINISTRATION OF CHURCH AFFAIRS. HE THEREFORE CONSIDERS THE JURIDICAL BASIS FOR ECCLESIASTICAL LIFE AS MORE SOLIDLY BASED THAN IN ANY OTHER EAST EUROPEAN STATE.

4. IN ANY FUTURE DISCUSSIONS, WHOSE TIMING HAS NOT BEEN FIRMLY ESTABLISHED, THE VATICAN, ACCORDING TO CASAROLI, WILL SEEK SPECIFIC GUARANTEES WITH RESPECT TO: (1) THE CONCRETE AREAS IN WHICH THE CHURCH WILL ENJOY AUTONOMY; (2) THE NUMBER OF NEW CHURCHES THAT CAN BE BUILT ANNUALLY WITHIN GDR TERRITORY; AND (3) THE NUMBER OF THEOLOGICAL STUDENTS THAT GDR WILL PERMIT TO STUDY IN ROME. PENDING THE NEGOTIATION OF THESE GUARANTEES, CASAROLI STATED THAT THE VATICAN WILL ADOPT A WAIT-AND-SEE ATTITUDE. IN THIS CONNECTION, HE DID NOT RULE OUT A RETURN VISIT TO THE VATICAN BY GDR FOREIGN MINISTER FISCHER AT SOME TIME, ALTHOUGH SUCH VISIT NOT DISCUSSED ON THIS TRIP. VOLPE

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